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DEPARTMENT FOR AF DAS YAMAMOTO  
LONDON, PARIS, ROME FOR AFRICA WATCHER

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SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA: FOREIGN MINISTER DISCUSSES EEBC MEETING  
PARTICIPATION

REF: ADDIS ABABA 2223

Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES VICKI HUDDLESTON FOR REASONS 1.4 (B,D)

//CORRECTED COPY OF ADDIS ABABA 2256//

¶1. (C) Summary. Deputy Foreign Minister Tekeda Alemu told the Charge August 15 that Ethiopia was undecided about attending the August 24 Ethiopia-Eritrea Boundary Commission (EEBC) meeting claiming that Eritrea had done little to show its interest in the process. The Charge told Tekeda that Ethiopia, for tactical reasons and because it has been a good partner in the process, needs to attend the EEBC. As the Prime Minister stated (reftel), the decision process is just beginning and is tied to Ethiopia's conclusions about how to deal with the new destabilizing threat from Eritrea. The Secretary's proposed call will certainly reinforce our

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position and likely illicit a 'yes' to both attending the August 24 talks and parallel talks.

¶2. (C) The Charge also told Tekeda that the Prime Minister had approved a joint USAID/CJTF-HOA humanitarian operation in response to the flooding in and around the Dire Dawa area. The Foreign Minister promised to begin internal consultations on allowing IFES to enter the country under the auspices of African Union election monitoring initiative. Tekeda concluded the meeting by telling the Charge that Libyan President Qadhafi had been pressing Ethiopia to join the Community of Sahel-Sahara States (CEN-SAD). End Summary.

¶3. (C) In response to the Charge's query about whether Ethiopia intended to send a representative to the planned August 24 EEBC meeting, Tekeda said that he had not discussed the matter with the Prime Minister or within the Foreign Ministry itself and was uncommittal about sending an envoy. He said he was unclear about what Ethiopia might achieve from such a meeting. Tekeda indicated that he questioned the usefulness of the process in light of a June 15 letter where Eritrea announced it would not continue with the process unless the EEBC decision was fully implemented. He added that Eritrea was not prepared to comply with and outright rejected the three points outlined at the February 22 Witness meeting: the need for technical discussion, a neutral facilitator, and complete removal of United Nations Mission in Eritrea and Ethiopia (UNMEE) restrictions. Given this, he questioned, what should Ethiopia do?

¶4. (C) The Charge explained that while success was not assured, the United States was calling on its partner

Ethiopia to attend to the meeting and move towards demarcation of the border. The Charge pushed Tekeda to explain why Ethiopia might not attend the meeting even though it had attended all previous ones, saying that it would be inconsistent with the country's previous actions. Tekeda said Eritrea's recent actions to destabilize the region, such as funding the Union of Islamic Courts and other terrorist-related organizations like the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), were a "declaration of war" and have "changed everything." The Charge told Tekeda that she too was concerned about Eritrea's destabilizing effect on the region, but this is all the more reason to attend the EEBC meeting, she said. The Charge recommended that Ethiopia begin demarcation on the 85 percent of the border it does not contest to start a process of dialogue. In the very least, the Charge argued, Ethiopia should attend the meeting as a tactical move to demonstrate its willingness to resolve the border conflict to the international community. Tekeda concluded by saying Ethiopia's strategic objectives were unchanged and that putting the crisis with Eritrea behind it and overall peace in the region were still its goals, but the decision on whether to attend the meeting will "not be easy." Nevertheless, Tekeda concluded, "we will do what is best."

15. (C) PolEcon Chief explained to the Foreign Minister that the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) planned to fund an election monitoring program at the African Union (AU) that would require IFES personnel to visit Ethiopia and asked for Tekeda's assistance with the visa process. Tekeda said that in light of what transpired with IRI, NDI and IFES during the election period, consultations would be necessary amongst several federal agencies. (Note: IRI, NDI and IFES were asked to leave Ethiopia for reasons related to their work during the 2005 elections. End Note.) Tekeda indicated Ethiopia was in a unique situation in that a multilateral organization like the AU is located with its borders and

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recognized that the GOE may need to overcome its objections to facilitate non-Ethiopian focused AU programming.

16. (C) Charge informed the Foreign Minister about the USG's offer to supply tents, 50,000 gallons of water, and 20,000 meals to those affected by the flooding in and around Dire Dawa. (Note: The Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) will convoy the materials from its facilities in Djibouti to the Dire Dawa area. End Note.) Tekeda welcomed the assistance and asked that post keep in touch with the Prime Minister's office to ensure no confusion when the convoy travels from Djibouti to Dire Dawa.

17. (C) At the meeting's conclusion, Tekeda mentioned to the Charge that Libya has been lobbying Ethiopia to join CEN-SAD. Tekeda added that Qadhafi was "fixated" on Ethiopia joining the organization and went as far to invite the Ethiopian First Lady to Libya and pass a CEN-SAD resolution calling for Ethiopia to join. Tekeda said that Ethiopia was reluctant to join the organization because it is dominated by Muammar Muhammed al-Qadhafi and Ethiopia would have to accept "all of his decisions." Though, Tekeda point out, Ethiopia may join as a mechanism to stop Libya from "meddling in its affairs" by funding the Somalia UIC via Eritrea.

18. (C) Comment: By early next week Ethiopia should have made the decision on the EEBC. The Secretary's call, which Charge mentioned to Meles, will reinforce how serious we are about Ethiopia's attendance at the August 24 meeting and parallel talks. End Comment.  
HUDDLESTON